

Consumer Help Line
888-333-WUTC (9882)
consumer@utc.wa.gov

TTY
800-416-5289

Education and Outreach
360-664-1110

Media Line
360-664-1116

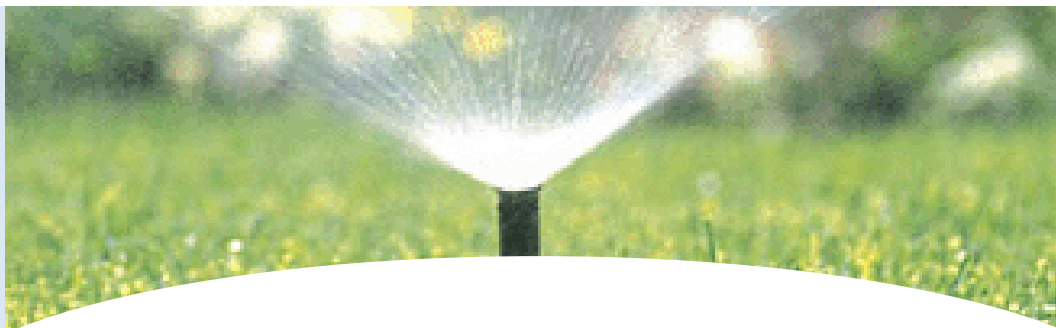
The UTC regulates the services of privately or investor owned utility and transportation companies. Our mission is to ensure that services are fairly priced, available, reliable and safe.

Regulated companies:

- Telephone
- Electricity
- Natural Gas
- Water
- Garbage
- Recycling
- Residential Movers
- Charter Buses
- Airport Shuttles
- Commercial Ferries
- Natural Gas Pipeline

General Information
360-664-1160
www.utc.wa.gov

PO Box 47250
1300 S Evergreen Pk Dr SW
Olympia WA 98504



Frequently Asked Questions: Water Company Services

The Utilities and Transportation Commission (commission) regulates privately-owned water companies, which serve more than 100 customers or have charges that exceed an average of \$471 per customer per year. The commission does not regulate the rates or services of city, town or county water systems, Public Utility Districts, cooperative or homeowners associations.

How do I file a service complaint?

Whenever you experience a problem with your water service or have a complaint, contact your service provider first and give them a chance to correct the problem, ask to speak to a supervisor if necessary. If you cannot resolve your problem with the utility, there are two places to turn for help:

For problems with billing, meter reading, establishing service and similar issues call the commission:

Toll-free Consumer Help Line: 1-888-333-WUTC (9882)

Address: PO Box 47250, Olympia, WA 98504-7250

www.utc.wa.gov.

complaints@utc.wa.gov

When you call the commission, our consumer protection specialists will attempt to mediate the problem with the company by opening an informal complaint. If the problem is not resolved informally and it involves a possible violation of law, commission rule, or the company's own tariff, you may file a formal complaint. You do not have to be a lawyer to file a formal complaint, but it is a formal legal proceeding with hearings, witnesses and legal documents.

Help us help you, and report any problems that are not resolved by the company.

FAQ: Water Company Services

When you contact the commission with a complaint, please provide the following information:

- Your name, mailing address and phone number;
- The name of the company you have a problem with;
- Your account number, if possible;
- Whether you have contacted the company with your problem and the result;
- As much detail as possible about the problem; and
- What you would like to see done to resolve it.

Commission authority is limited to ordering refunds and penalties, it cannot award you damages. You will need to go to court if you are seeking compensation for damages caused by the company.

If your complaint is about the rates charged by the company in general, the process is different. Customers may file a complaint against rates, but state law requires the complaint to be signed by 25 customers of the water company or 25 percent of the customers, whichever is less. A complaint against rates may also be filed by a mayor, city council or the commission.

How do I complain about the quality or quantity of my water?

For problems with the quality or quantity of your water contact the State Department of Health (DOH):

1-800-521-0323 (ask for the Drinking Water Section)

PO Box 47822, Olympia, WA 98504-7822

www.doh.wa.gov

Can a customer seek a refund for poor water quality?

Yes. A water company may be required to refund water charges due to poor water quality. The refund amount, if any, would be determined at a hearing before the commission and it would only be based on estimated water use for human consumption - a small fraction of normal daily water usage. A refund would not include water used lawns, gardens, farm animals, baths/showers, etc.

Can I file a formal complaint about poor water quality?

Yes. If you believe a company has violated a law, rule, commission order or provision as published in its tariff, you may file a formal complaint. A formal complaint places the burden of proof on the person or company making the complaint. This process is a formal hearing before an administrative law judge, who will make a decision based on the record and the merits of the case. Formal complaints must be filed in writing and must clearly state the complaint and the relief requested. For more information on formal complaints, visit www.utc.wa.gov/fileacomplaint.

Can I ask the water company to install a water meter for my service? If so, who pays for the water meter?

Yes. If a company has rates for metered service in its tariff, the company has 30 days to install the meter from the date of your request. The company can charge you in advance for the cost of the meter and installation, both of which must be published in the company's applicable tariff. The company must return the cost of the meter (but not the installation) through a partial bill credit until repaid.

FAQ: Water Company Services

Will the water company test my water meter if I request it?

Yes. The company will test your meter for accuracy for no charge for the first test. A company can charge for any additional meter tests as requested by the customer within a twelve month period. The company has ten days after a complaint to perform a test.

Can a water company estimate my water bill if I'm a metered customer?

Yes. A company cannot estimate your water bill for more than two consecutive billing cycles.

How do you read a water meter?

If a water customer requests assistance in reading a meter, the company must provide information on how to read the meter. Some meters read straight across like the odometer on a car. Other meters are circular with five or six dials. Read each dial clockwise, starting at the 100,000 dial. If a pointer is between the two figures, read the lower number. Remember - your meter is never reset.

Will I receive notice from the water company for interruption of service?

Yes, if the interruption is pre-planned. Customers will receive twenty-four hours advanced notice through newspaper, radio announcements or other means.

Does the water company have to provide a toll-free number for customers?

No.

What can I do when I am not able to reach someone at my water company?

State law requires the water company to maintain a business location and a telephone system. Customers must be able to leave a message to report an emergency or a service interruption. If you cannot reach your water company, you may contact the commission's Consumer Protection Department toll-free at 1-888-333-WUTC (9882).

If I report a service failure or an emergency - how will I know the company is going to fix the problem?

The company must respond to the person who reported the service failure or emergency within twenty-four hours of the report. The company contact may state that they received your call and are working on the problem. You probably will not get a detailed report - but you will know the company is working on the problem.

I've called the company to ask a question and the company does not return my call. What can I do?

When you call the company and the call is not an emergency, the company must return the call within two business days. If the company does not return your call, call the commission at 1-888-333-WUTC (9882).

I wrote a letter to my water company asking questions about my water service, does the company have to respond?

Yes. A water company must acknowledge and respond to your written inquiry within two weeks of receiving the letter.

FAQ: Water Company Services

Do I have to give access to my premises to the company?

Authorized personnel of the company have the right to enter your property during reasonable hours to perform meter reading, maintenance, testing, and installation or removal of the company's property. Customers may ask to see the company personnel's identification before allowing entry to your property.

For More information

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